While various embodiments have been described above, it should be understood that they have been presented by way of example only, and not limitation. Thus, the breadth and scope of a preferred embodiment should not be limited by any of the above-described exemplary

5   embodiments, but should be defined only in accordance with the following claims and their equivalents.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1.   A method for tracking usage of a recording medium based on an identifier stored on the recording medium, the method comprising the steps of:

    (a)   receiving from a client device an indicia corresponding to the identifier of the recording medium upon the recording medium being input into the client device by a user;

    (b)   receiving from the client device an indicia identifying the client device;

    (c)   determining a characteristic of the storage medium based upon the received indicia corresponding to the identifier;

    (d)   identifying the client device based upon the received indicia identifying the client device; and

    (e)   storing the characteristic of the recording medium and the identity of the client device in a database.

2.   A method for tracking a recording medium as recited in claim 1 wherein the characteristic of the recording medium includes an intended usage.

3.   A method for tracking a recording medium as recited in claim 1 wherein the characteristic of the recording medium includes whether the recording medium was intended to for rental or retail sale.

4.   A method for tracking a recording medium as recited in claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

    (a)   utilizing the client device to read the identifier; and

11. A method for tracing data as recited in claim 1 further including the steps of:

(a) generating a coupon associated with the identifier of the recording medium;

(b) determining that the coupon has been redeemed;

(c) disabling the coupon based upon the determination that the coupon has been redeemed.

12. A method for tracing data as recited in claim 1 wherein the determined characteristic of the recording medium is that the recording medium has been rented to a rental client, and further including the step of, after identifying the client device, allowing play only on the identified client device.

13. A method for tracing data as recited in claim 1 wherein the determined characteristic of the recording medium is that the recording medium has been rented to a client for a predetermined number of plays, the method further comprising the steps of:

(a) monitoring the number of times the video has played; and

(b) disallowing play of the video after the recording medium has been played the predetermined number of times.

14. A method for tracing data as recited in claim 1 wherein the determined characteristic of the recording medium is that the recording medium has been stolen, the method further comprising the step of disallowing play of the video based upon the determination that the video has been stolen.

(b)   transmitting the indicia corresponding to the identifier from the client device to a server via the internet utilizing a browser embodied on the client device.

5.   A method for tracking data as recited in claim 1 further including the step of determining a manner in which the recording medium is being used by the client device based upon the determined client identity and recording medium characteristic.

6.   A method for tracking data as recited in claim 1 wherein the characteristic of the recording medium includes the characteristic that the recording medium is a retail-sale video, the method further including the step of monitoring the database to determine whether the retail-sale recording medium is being operated on multiple client devices.

7.   A method for tracking data as recited in claim 1 further including the step of determining, based upon the identifier, a merchant from whom the user obtained the recording medium.

8.   A method for tracking data as recited in claim 1 further including the steps of:

(a)   determining, based upon the identifier, a merchant from whom the user obtained the recording medium; and

(b)   transmitting a marketing message to the client device incenting the user to further patronize the merchant.

9.   A method for tracking data as recited in claim 1 further including the steps of:

(a)   determining, based upon the recording medium identifier, a merchant from which the recording medium was obtained;

(b)   selecting from a database of preferred merchants a merchant most suited to the user based upon the merchant identification; and

(c)   directing the user to the selected merchant.

10.   A method for tracking data as recited in claim 1 further including the steps of:

(a)   storing the identifier in a database of other identifiers;

(b)   selecting an identifier at random from the directory of identifiers; and

(c)   issuing a prize to a person associated with the randomly selected identifier.